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SECURITY COUNCIL EXPEDITES PLANNING FOR DAFUR PEACEKEEPERS

Ambassador Bolton says United Nations has important role in Darfur

By Judy Aita
Washington File UN Correspondent

United Nations -- The Security Council voted unanimously May 16 to accelerate planning for a U.N. peacekeeping mission in Darfur and called for the deployment of a peacekeeping planning mission to the region within a week.

The council moved quickly after the African Union Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué supporting the transition from its peacekeeping mission in Sudan (AMIS) to a U.N.-led peacekeeping force (UNMIS). Previously, the Sudanese government in Khartoum had refused to allow U.N. peacekeeping experts into the region.

The Security Council approved Resolution 1679, calling on the parties to the Darfur Peace Agreement to facilitate and work with the African Union, the United Nations and regional and international organizations to accelerate transition to a U.N. operation.

Acting under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, the council also said it intended to consider taking "strong and effective measures, such as a travel ban and assets freeze, against any individual or group that violates or attempts to block the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement." It also called on groups that have

not signed the May 5 agreement negotiated in Abuja, Nigeria, to do so without delay.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said that the resolution “sends a strong message of Security Council intent to move expeditiously to replace AMIS with UNMIS and increase assistance to AMIS in the interim.”

“We’ve not been able to get logistical planning personnel into the Darfur region to do the work they need to do, and it is very clear from this resolution we expect this to happen immediately,” the ambassador said.

The most important aspect of the resolution, Bolton said, “is the invocation of Chapter VII to make clear we think there’s an important role for U.N. peacekeeping force,” especially in protecting innocent civilians in Darfur.

The 7,300-member African Union peacekeeping force, while praised for the work it has done, does not have the resources and personnel to exert control over the region. In its resolution, the Security Council asked nations to provide resources to strengthen AMIS’ capacity until a U.N. operation is mounted.

The council asked U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to report on a force structure, requirements, potential troop-contributing countries and costs a week after the planning mission returns from Darfur.

Bolton pointed out that the council acted under Chapter VII “to make it unmistakable that it’s not just the Security Council but the African Union as well that support the transition from the AU force to the U.N. force, that we want that done expeditiously, [and] that we want cooperation from everyone concerned.”

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the initial draft of the resolution to the council on May 9 when the council held a ministerial level meeting at the request of the United States to discuss ways to move the peace process forward and deal with the humanitarian crisis.

The resolution was co-sponsored by Congo, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Peru, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Tanzania and the United States.

NEGOTIATORS SEE PROGRESS ON U.S.-CHINA BEEF TRADE PROTOCOL

Agriculture, trade officials finish first talks on food-safety guidelines

By Susan Krause
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States and China have made progress in negotiating an agreement that would allow for resumption of U.S. beef exports to China, according to a May 15 announcement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Delegations from the two countries met in Beijing May 13 and May 14 to discuss the terms of a science-based trade protocol, consistent with food-safety guidelines of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

The talks followed up on China’s commitment -- made a month earlier at the 17th meeting of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) in Washington -- to reopen its market to U.S. beef by June, following development of such a protocol. (See related article.)

The JCCT -- an annual dialogue among the two countries’ senior officials in the areas of agriculture and trade -- serves as a forum to identify and resolve trade problems and to expand commercial opportunities.

“We’ve made considerable progress with China during these discussions to reopen their market to U.S. beef and we will meet again soon to conclude the talks,” said J.B. Penn, USDA’s under secretary for farm and foreign agriculture services.

Penn led the U.S. delegation, which included representatives of several USDA agencies, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). Ge Zhirong, China’s vice minister for the administration of quality supervision inspection and quarantine, led his country’s delegation, USDA said.

During the talks, the two sides also completed a memorandum of cooperation that would enable them to address food-safety issues on an ongoing basis, Penn said.

China and several other East Asian countries banned imports of U.S. beef when a case of bovine spongiform

encephalopathy (BSE, or “mad cow” disease) was confirmed in the United States in December 2003 in a single cow of Canadian origin.

Two other cases have been confirmed in the United States since then.

But after two years of extensive testing, USDA reported in April that the incidence of BSE in the United States is extremely low, with no more than four to seven cases indicated in a cattle population of about 42 million.

The United States has pushed for implementation of trade guidelines based on the scientific standards of the OIE, which oversees livestock safety issues for 167 member countries.

U.S. and Chinese officials expect to meet for a second round of talks within the next few weeks, according to a USDA spokesman.

Another team of USDA officials is traveling to Japan to continue discussions on resumption of U.S. beef trade to that country, the USDA announcement said.

Japan partially lifted a two-year ban on U.S. beef imports in December 2005, allowing the entry of boneless beef and beef products from cattle less than 30 months of age.

Japan reinstated the ban in January 2006, after discovering prohibited bone fragments in a shipment of veal.

HIV/AIDS VACCINE AWARENESS DAY RECOGNIZED MAY 18

Thousands of volunteers, researchers involved in vaccine search

Washington – HIV/AIDS activists, volunteers and researchers will be among those recognizing HIV/AIDS Vaccine Awareness Day May 18, an occasion that draws attention to the need for a vaccine to prevent this disease, according to the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), one of the National Institutes of Health.

Significant progress has been made in understanding the virus and its attack on the immune system in the 25 years since the disease first was reported, according to a NIAID press release.

At least 58 vaccine candidates have been tested in 96 HIV vaccine clinical trials involving 23,000 volunteers without a breakthrough, but the search goes on for a serum that will provide immunity to the virus.

HIV/AIDS treatments also have been developed that prolong life and allow persons with AIDS to live productively with the disease, but still the disease has taken the lives of 25 million people since its 1981 identification.

The NIAID statement says international collaborative research projects continue the pursuit of a vaccine. The Global HIV/AIDS Vaccine Enterprise is working to accelerate the development of a new HIV vaccine, and the Center for HIV-AIDS Vaccine Immunology is working on problems in vaccine design and development. Community organizations have joined the scientists in the effort to develop and test HIV vaccines.

The May 15 press release says that about 20 community groups across the United States are educating their communities about this work, trying to recruit more volunteers and expand support for the research.

The NIAID statement thanks all the volunteers, scientists and health professionals engaged in this campaign on HIV/AIDS Vaccine Awareness Day. It also promotes a theme of “Be the Generation” to find an HIV vaccine in the ninth annual recognition of the event.

“With over 40 million people living with HIV worldwide,” says the campaign Web site, “and over 20 million lives already lost, the need for an HIV vaccine is more urgent than ever.”

More information is available on NIAID’s HIV Vaccine Awareness Day Web site:

<http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/events/HVAD>

and the Web sites of the HIV Vaccine Trials Network:

<http://www.hvtn.org/>

and Be the Generation:

<http://www.bethegeneration.org/about.htm>

For additional information, see HIV/AIDS:

http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/hiv_aids.html

NASA INTERNET SOFTWARE SHOWS PLANETS IN 3-D COLOR

Web users from 100 nations have downloaded free World Wind program

Washington -- NASA has updated its World Wind computer program that enables Internet users to explore the Earth and the moon, fly virtually through huge Martian canyons and visit Venus and Jupiter in three-dimensional (3-D) color.

The new version also allows users to see some of Jupiter's moons, and to cruise into the depths of Earth's oceans. Computer users from more than 100 nations have acquired the free World Wind program, according to a May 15 NASA press release.

"The users -- from the comfort of their own homes -- can visit anyplace on Earth, Mars and other places in the solar system," said Chris Maxwell, lead World Wind developer at NASA Ames Research Center in California.

Users need a standard personal computer with a video card and an Internet connection. More than 10 million users have used World Wind since NASA released it about a year ago.

"NASA World Wind is close ... to 20 million downloads now," said Patrick Hogan, program manager for World Wind at NASA Ames, "with around 200,000 new users each week. NASA serves over 100 requests per second for World Wind imagery."

The program itself is only five megabytes, he said, but data containing place names and imagery make up the rest of the 50-megabyte World Wind download. A version written in the Java computer language that will run on Macintosh and Linux computers is scheduled for release in September 2006.

"NASA is providing the free World Wind program to improve public and researcher access to high-quality imagery and other data," Hogan said.

The computer program can transport Internet users to nearly anywhere on the moon, when they zoom in from a global view to closer pictures of Earth's natural satellite taken by the Clementine spacecraft in the 1990s.

"We can ... [now] deliver the moon at 66 feet [20 meters] of resolution," Hogan said.

Launched in early 1994, Clementine took 1.8 million pictures of the lunar surface during a two-month orbit of the moon. Besides allowing a view into space, the program helps users better understand Earth processes, such as changing ozone conditions, ocean temperature, weather and earthquake activity.

"We're working with the United States Geological Survey [USGS] and the Department of Defense to deliver their data to the public," Hogan said.

The Department of Defense uses World Wind software and the U.S. National Guard plans to use the software to help respond to natural disasters. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is also beginning to use the NASA software.

The program is delivering terabytes of global NASA satellite data that are a result of years of daily observations of precipitation, temperature, barometric pressure and much more. A terabyte is approximately 1 trillion bytes.

Hurricane Katrina data are part of World Wind's collection of images.

NASA programmers recently increased the resolution of images of Earth from 1-kilometer resolution to 500-meter resolution in an upgrade called "Blue Marble, Next Generation Earth."

Some World Wind datasets include images of the entire Earth at 15-meter resolution. World Wind accesses public domain USGS aerial photography and topographic maps, and data from space shuttle missions and the Landsat satellite.

The newly revised free World Wind program, World Wind screen shots, and a press release with further information are available on the NASA Web site:
<http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov/>

User information is also available at the World Wind Web site:
http://www.worldwindcentral.com/wiki/Main_page

Pleases Note: Most texts and transcript mentioned in the U.S. Mission Daily Bulletin are available via our homepage: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/>

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